



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: June 15, 2005 (05-27)

Contact: Kyle Murphy (360) 902-1923  
Brad White (360) 902-2071  
John Lundberg (360) 586-8459

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Visit our Web site at: [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov)

## **Historical reduction of Spartina grass occurs in Willapa Bay**

**OLYMPIA** – The tide has finally turned in the battle against Spartina cord grass in Willapa Bay, with state officials reporting a historical reduction of the noxious weed over the last two years.

Officials for the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) – designated by the state legislature as the lead agency for the eradication of Spartina in state waters – report that thanks to an aggressive eradication program, the size of the Spartina infestation has been reduced by about 3,000 acres, to approximately 5,700 acres.

Spartina is a tough cord grass that destroys shorebird and waterfowl habitats, converts mudflats to meadows, and poses a devastating threat to Washington's shellfish (clams and oysters) industry.

"The past two years represent an unprecedented development anywhere in the fight against Spartina," said Kyle Murphy, WSDA's Spartina coordinator. "We think we can eliminate most of the infestation by 2008 or 2009 if present funding continues."

Approximately \$2.76 million was spent in 2004 on Spartina eradication efforts in Washington by the state and federal government -- \$1.76 million in state funds and \$1 million from the federal government.

Murphy says several factors are responsible for the big reduction in 2003 and 2004. Among them are a new herbicide *imazapyr* that was used for the first time in 2004; new equipment such as airboats, sprayers, and tracked vehicles; and unified efforts of more than 10 state and federal agencies and offices in the war against Spartina.

Joining the state Department of Agriculture in the fight against Spartina are the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Washington Department of Natural Resources; Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; Willapa Bay-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association; noxious weed control boards in Pacific, Snohomish, Island, Skagit, Grays Harbor, Clallam, King, and San Juan counties; landowners in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor; Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe; Tulalip Indian Tribe; Swinomish Indian Tribe; Suquamish Indian Tribe; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; University of Washington Olympic Natural Resource Center; Washington State University Long Beach Cranberry Research Center; and The Nature Conservancy.

MORE

Historical reduction of Spartina – Page 2 of 2  
June 15, 2005

“Public awareness of the threat to Willapa Bay has also been very helpful in our eradication efforts,” Murphy stated. “We need to continue publicizing the problem and what we’re doing about it.”

In order to do that, the public is invited to an information meeting on June 23 in Long Beach to learn about upcoming plans for eradicating Spartina from private lands. The meeting, sponsored by the Coastal Resources Alliance, Pacific County Weed Board, and WSDA, will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Cranberry Research Station, 2907 Pioneer Rd. For more information on the meeting, call (360) 484-7128.

Spartina is native to the U.S. East Coast. It was introduced into Willapa Bay in the 1890s in the form of packing material in which oysters were being shipped from the East Coast. For reasons scientists cannot explain, the cord grass suddenly began to grow steadily in the 1970s. The growth exploded in the 1990s.

For more information on Spartina in Washington state, visit the WSDA Web site at [www.agr.wa.gov](http://www.agr.wa.gov) and click respectively on “Plants and Insects” and “Spartina.”

###